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EXHIBIT 11
DATE 2-14-13
HR 396

February 14, 2013

**Testimony of Defenders of Wildlife
Before the Montana House Agriculture Committee**

RE: Opposition to House Bill No. 396, sponsored by M. Lang

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Defenders of Wildlife and our more than 4,000 members and supporters in Montana, thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 396. We oppose House Bill 396 for the following reasons.

HB 396 would inappropriately give county commissions veto power over state and tribal wildlife agencies by requiring county commission approval for translocation or relocation of wild bison. This would go against 112 years of wildlife management and conservation in Montana and set an unfortunate precedent for future wildlife decisions. The Montana Fish and Game Department was established in 1901 specifically because county protection of wildlife was not working. There was a need for state management of the state's wildlife back in 1901, and this is where it should remain today: with professional wildlife managers at the state and tribal level.

HB 396 would also strain tribal-state relations after much progress has been made in recent years. Bison are extremely important to several tribes in Montana and county officials should not be allowed to prohibit restoration of wild bison to lands belonging to willing tribes, nor should counties be able to prevent Montana from cooperating with tribes in bison endeavors. Such a decision would not stand up to the extensive body of legal precedent that tribes have authority to make wildlife decisions on tribal lands.

Montanans overwhelmingly support wild bison conservation in this state, and we expect wildlife decisions to remain in the hands of the agency that Montanans have counted on for 112 years to manage the state's wildlife on our behalf.

For these reasons, please oppose House Bill 396.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Jonathan Proctor
Rockies and Plains Representative
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